

Family Style Meal Service Information for Coaches

1. Family style meals are appropriate and encouraged for young children. Many important developmental, social and nutritional benefits can come from this type of meal service. It also has cultural significance. In family style meals, children participate more fully in their own eating and in the sharing of food with others.
2. Family style meal service provides a comfortable and relaxing atmosphere where children eat together and are free to converse with each other.
3. Family style meals first and foremost means that the children and adults are sitting at the table to pass, serve, and share in the meal together. Infants in high chairs are also brought up to the dining table and included in the mealtime experience.
 - a) The meal itself is a learning experience. Children develop skills through interaction with adults and other children. The adult's role is to provide support.
 - b) Adults are patient and support children and infants by being present and by modeling table manners and social skills during meal time. Children learn from adults who role modeling during the meal. If the adult uses please and thank you, the children will also learn to do so. Children also learn from peers, if a child eats or tries a new food the other children will also learn to do so.
 - c) Motor skills can be developed by serving plates and passing food and while children push themselves to progress from using fingers to using utensils. Children and adults both model for each other and infants on how to eat foods and how specific foods are eaten.
 - d) Family style meal service provides a comfortable and relaxing atmosphere where language skills can be developed. Adults can participate and facilitate discussion at the dining table. Allowing children to enjoying each other's company in silence or in conversation is a life lesson.
4. Family style meal service means that some of the foods for the meal are offered in bowls or dishes on the table, but maybe not all of it. The cook who prepares the foods can recommend how the meal is served. For example, soup might be served individually (plate style or served by an adult) because it is hot, and the other foods for the meal are passed around.
5. Family style meal service means serving foods in bowls or dishes on the table. Children serve themselves, depending on their abilities, with the help of an adult or individually. The amount of food on the table meets the CACFP Meal Pattern and is enough to meet everyone's appetites.
6. Family style meal service is flexible. Children choose how much or how little food they want. The children can see that there is more food available, if they want more.
7. Offering food is as simple as placing it on the table and passing food around the table. Children may say yes or no. Simply asking "who would like more?" is a great way to offer food.
8. Maintaining Ellyn Satter's "Division of Responsibility" in Feeding is essential to a successful meal service for children. www.ellynsatter.com
 - a) Parents provide structure, support and opportunities. Children choose how much and whether to eat from what the parents provide.
 - b) The January 2010, Family Meal Focus Newsletter #41, *The Division of Responsibility in the Trenches* is a great resource to assist in maintaining the Division of Responsibility in Feeding.